

# Commander visits Old Guard in Horn of Africa

Story and photos by Spc. Eric M. McKeeby

**CAMP LEMONIER, Djibouti**—The regimental commander of the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment, "The Old Guard," visited the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa this week to meet with Old Guard soldiers deployed here.

Col. Chuck Taylor toured the region with the Regimental Command Sergeant Major Harry Wimbrough and regimental chaplain Maj. Raymond Robinson inspecting quality-of-life and getting a chance to view missions of Bravo Company.

Bravo Co., led by Capt. Michael J. Trotter, is supporting Operation Enduring Freedom and the Global War on Terrorism as part of CJTF-HOA and has engaged in a number of tactical missions since arriving here December 2003, including force protection duties and training exercises with regional militaries.

The weeklong visit, beginning Feb. 1, was an opportunity to lift the spirits of soldiers of Bravo Co. and to discover the needs of those soldiers while observing the company on CJTF-HOA missions, Taylor said.

"The purpose of the visit was to support morale and welfare of the soldiers and to ensure that our soldiers are performing to standard for the joint task force," Taylor said.

Taylor, who took command last July, began the week with a visit to Bravo Co. soldiers at a temporary training facility named "Camp United" in Hurso, Ethiopia. Soldiers there have been training with elements of the Ethiopian army for almost a month.

Observing soldier training in Ethiopia and, later in the week, other soldier training in various parts of Djibouti, including a combat recovery exercise deep in a mountainous terrain, Taylor said he was impressed by the tactical competency of the company.

"I've had the opportunity to visit soldiers doing mil-to-mil training in Ethiopia, and I've had the opportunity to conduct view operational training missions with them," Taylor said.

"The leadership and soldiers of Team Battlehard are demonstrating tactical competence in all the critical skills they prepared for as well as developing trust and confidence as war fighting members of the Joint Team. I could not be prouder of Capt. Trotter and all that these great soldiers have accomplished," Taylor added.

Prior to departing Fort Myer, Va., for CJTF-HOA, the company spent a rigorous two months engaged in tactical rehearsals at Fort A. P. Hill, Va., and at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, La. Taylor said the two months of training have been invaluable to the company as it continues to operate here.

"It set the foundation for everything to come. If they had not had the intensity of training, it would have made this much more challenging, but their pre-deployment training set the foundation for success," Taylor said.

Spending time here, based out of the Camp Lemonnier billets, Taylor, Wimbrough and Robinson, were able to embed themselves into the lives of soldiers for a few days. In addition to awarding coins and awards for exceptional service, the command group integrated themselves into the more routine aspects of soldier life, eating meals at the Bob Hope



*Spc. Matthew Lemon holds the Bravo Co. guidon while Col. Chuck Taylor, regimental commander of the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment, "The Old Guard," addresses the company at a re-enlistment streamer and awards ceremony held Feb. 6 on the Camp Lemonnier basketball court. Taylor spent a week at the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa with Bravo soldiers, who have been here since December 2003.*

Chow Hall Djibouti and attending physical training on a patch of hardened clay next to the airfield here.

Taylor said he was pleasantly surprised at the quality of living conditions here.

"My vision was that this was going to be a very austere and difficult environment to operate in and that it would be taxing on the resources to support quality-of-life here over a period of time. I was thoroughly impressed with what the joint force has done for all the troops here. From the dining facility to the gym to the tents, they have absolutely exceeded all our expectations," he said.

The well-being of the soldiers Taylor said he attributes to the leadership of CJTF-HOA.

"The Joint Task Force Commander, Brig. Gen. Robeson and his staff are doing all the right things to support all the troops in HOA—the joint team is as strong as I have ever seen," Taylor said.

"My responsibility was to get the soldiers trained and ready to support the joint force commander," Taylor said. "My focus remains at Fort Myer with the soldiers and all our families because I know that the joint commander here is completely confident in this company's capabilities."

Trotter compared the transition of commands to the awkwardness of a first day at school, but he said the company has grown into life at CJTF-HOA.

"We have been here almost two months, and we know where to go to get support," Trotter said. "We have been integrated into the CJTF-HOA support structure."

At Fort Myer, Taylor oversees support for families of deployed soldiers that includes a website featuring Bravo Co. soldiers at CJTF-HOA and regular activities of the Family Readiness Group. He said he also maintains e-mail linkages with Trotter and

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*Sgt. Maj. Harry Wimbrough, regimental command sergeant major of the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment, "The Old Guard," observes as soldiers from The Old Guard's Bravo Company fire on a range in rural Djibouti. Wimbrough spent a week with Col. Chuck Taylor, regimental commander, visiting Old Guard soldiers deployed to the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa.*